



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**ALBANIA**

# CASE STUDY

## Raising the Bar for Attorneys

### Transparent, regulated exam helps improve legal sector's integrity



Photo: Ermira Sheni/World Learning

Passing Albania's bar exam has become more rigorous, which the country's national lawyers' association hopes will raise the standards for lawyers and lead to reducing corruption in the judiciary.

***"Attorneys now realize that the bar exam is serious and demands both high levels of knowledge as well as personal integrity," said Vitore Tusha, former deputy head of Albania's National Chamber of Advocates.***

### Challenge

The prevalence of corruption in Albania is a major barrier to the country's transition and development. According to recent polls, corruption in the judiciary is widespread and lawyers are perceived as playing an intermediary role. The National Chamber of Advocates, Albania's bar association, is responsible for administering the bar exam, among other tasks. With an extremely high passing rate of 99 percent, the exam's integrity was perceived as questionable, and consequently reflected poorly on the chamber itself.

### Initiative

With the support of USAID, key members of the chamber attended a one-week training program in Plano, Texas, during which they realized the importance of improving their bar exam. By speaking with the executive director of the Texas Board of Law Examiners and others involved in administering Texas' bar exam, they learned ways to ensure a bias-free process and rules that determine the qualifications of applicants seeking bar admission.

### Results

Based on their experience in Texas, the chamber overhauled the bar examination. The bar exam contained more challenging questions, and steps were taken to prohibit unfair disclosure of exam questions. The chamber also improved the grading of the exam to ensure a more transparent and equitable evaluation of an applicant's performance levels. As a result, less than 60 percent of the applicants passed the exam. According to Vitore Tusha, the chamber's former deputy head, despite the lower percentage of applicants passing, the reforms have improved the image of the institution and will lead to greater integrity throughout the profession.

#### Telling Our Story

U.S. Agency for International Development  
Washington, DC 20523-1000  
<http://stories.usaid.gov>